

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-7 are pending.

Regarding the objection to the abstract, applicants submit herewith a replacement abstract and submit that the objections are overcome in view of the replacement abstract.

Objection to claims 1-3 and 7 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph.

Applicants submit that the objections to claims 1-3 and 7 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph are overcome in view of the amendment to the subject claims.

Regarding claim 1, the phrase "means of connection to a bi-directional communications network" has been deleted.

Regarding claim 2, the phrase "each second connector" is believed to be appropriate in view of the amendment to claim 1, which recites "at least a second connector..."

Regarding claim 3, the objections are believed to be overcome and the relationship between the constituent elements are now clear in view of the recitation that "... the switching circuit comprises two first inputs/output pins each linked to respective ones of two input/output pins of a controller managing the bidirectional transfer of data between the first or the second connector and a so-called main microprocessor of the apparatus, the switching circuit also comprises two second inputs/outputs and two third inputs/outputs allowing the connection of the first and second connector so that either the first connector is linked to the respective ones of the two inputs/outputs pins of the controller through respective ones of the first and second inputs/output pins, or the second connector is linked to the respective ones of the two inputs/outputs pins of the controller through the respective ones of the first and third inputs/output pins."

Regarding claim 7, the phrase "the peripheral or peripherals" has been replaced with "the peripheral apparatus."

Rejection of claims 1 and 3-7 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Meirsman (US 6,636,923)

Applicants submit that for the reasons discussed below amended claims 1 and 3-7 are not anticipated under 35 USC 103(b) by Meirsman.

The present invention relates to an apparatus that includes a switching circuit for changing the operating mode of the apparatus to a master mode to a slave mode, or vice versa, in response to the detection of the presence of a supply voltage on a connector. Specifically, claim 1 recites "... means of detecting a presence of the supply voltage on the first connector, the means of detecting controlling a switching circuit for switching the apparatus to a master mode of operation in relation to the peripheral apparatus in the case of the absence of the voltage, and to a slave mode of operation in relation to the master apparatus when the supply voltage is present." Applicants submit that nowhere does Meirsman disclose or suggest such a feature.

Meirsman discloses a hub station that includes host processor 24 coupled to hub circuit 22 for allowing the hub station to be part of more than one independent USB-like communication bus system at the same time. When a host station is connected to host connector 26, apparatus is capable of functioning as a pair of hub stations, one station connecting the local host processor 24 to respective slave connectors 28a-c, and the host station to its respective slave connectors 28a-c.

In that regard, Meirsman fails to disclose or suggest the above-cited feature of amended claim 1. Rather, Meirsman discloses detection of devices connected to the various connectors, and communications with the devices using the known USB protocol. Meirsman states that "The host station or hub station to which the new station is connected senses the interaction of the new staton. In a USB system, this is realized because the new station pulls up a potential on a pin of the USB connector." (col. 4, lines 7-10).

According to Meirsman, when a host station is connected to the apparatus, "... the hub circuit 22 will signal its presence to the new host station 38 connected to the host connector 26, using the normal USB protocol. In response to that signal the new host 38 will instruct the hub circuit 22 to activate the slave ports 28a-c." (col. 5, lines 5-8). That is, hub circuit 22

responds to instructions transmitted by new host 38. Nowhere does Meirsman disclose or suggest that the detection of the presence or absence of a supply voltage controls a switching circuit to trigger a change in mode of the apparatus.

In view of the above, applicants submit that Meirsman fails to disclose or suggest a notable feature of amended claim 1, and as such, claim 1, and claims 3-7 which depend therefrom, are not anticipated by Meirsman.

Rejection of claim 2 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Meirsman in further view of Russell (US 6584519)

The Office Action takes Official Notice in view of Russell that it would be obvious to utilize A and B type connectors with Meirsman. However, Applicants submit that the cited teachings of Russell fail to cure the defect of Meirsman as applied to amended claim 1. As such, applicants submit that claim 2, which depends from amended claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the combination of Meirsman and Russell for at least the same reason as that discussed above.

Having fully addressed the Examiner's rejections it is believed that, in view of the preceding amendments and remarks, this application stands in condition for allowance. Accordingly then, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully solicited. If, however, the Examiner is of the opinion that such action cannot be taken, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicant's attorney at (609) 734-6815, so that a mutually convenient date and time for a telephonic interview may be scheduled.

Respectfully submitted,


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